

## **BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Karel A. Ling**

Karel A. Ling, daughter of Naomi and John Gregg, was born in Bend, Oregon on March 23, 1940. When she was five, John Gregg died and her mother married Robert Charles Reed. Ling has one sister and three half-brothers.

She is a 1963 graduate of Linfield College where she earned a degree in social work.

In June 1965, Ling worked at Pālama Settlement's day camp program. Between 1965 and 1981, she worked in the settlement's youth programs. She was a supervisor in the in-community treatment of youthful offenders program. She was also involved in the neighborhood development program.

Ling left Pālama Settlement in 1981. She started a day-care service and later taught for more than five years. Since 1989, Ling has been employed as a community information specialist at Kāne'ōhe Marine Corps Base Headquarters.

She is married to Kenneth K.M. Ling. They raised five children and have eight grandchildren.

Tape No. 27-47-1-98

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Karel A. Ling (KL)

Kāne'ōhe, O'ahu

April 3, 1998

BY: Warren Nishimoto (WN)

WN: This is an interview with Karel Ling for the Pālama Settlement oral history project on April 3, 1998, and we are at her office at the Kāne'ōhe Marine Corps Base [Headquarters] in Kāne'ōhe, O'ahu. The interviewer is Warren Nishimoto.

Okay, Karel, what I'm going to do, first of all, is to ask you some background questions about, you know, your background and sort of little bit about your childhood growing up. You didn't expect to go that far right?

(Laughter)

KL: (Yes.) That's pretty far back, though I remember (some).

WN: But anyway, yeah, what you can remember, and we'll sort of bring you up to when you started at Pālama Settlement. But I just want to get a little bit of background about who you are.

KL: Okay.

WN: Okay? So first of all, tell me when and where you were born.

KL: I was born in Bend, Oregon, March 23, 1940, and . . .

WN: Something about your parents . . .

KL: . . . grew up there. Well, my father [John Kenneth Gregg], I lost when I was only about five years old. He was in the Second World War. He got shot out at sea, so he was (buried) there. And then my mother [Naomi Violet Stokoe] remarried, so I had a stepfather [Robert Charles Reed] that was really good to my sister and I (who was a year older than myself). And then (our family grew and) we ended up with three more brothers, (a) nice-sized family Excuse me.

WN: Mm hmm.

(Telephone rings. Taping stops, then resumes.)

WN: Okay, we were talking about your father, and what about your mother?

KL: She was also born and raised in Bend—this is in central Oregon—(also, her family lived for a while in Portland, then they went back to Bend where she) went to the high school. Her (graduation) picture was on the wall of Bend High School. We were pretty much raised in a small little country town less than ten thousand people, (where everyone knows everyone else).

WN: What was childhood like?

KL: Oh, good. Very good. We learned to ride horses, hunt in the woods, which were right out our back door, and ice skated in the winter. It was a lot different (kind of) weather (than what we have here). It was snow nine months out of the year rather than sun all year round. So it's (a totally) different (way of life). (I went to) a (small elementary) school, and our high school started at seventh grade, (there was no middle school, and) only one high school in the whole town. It started at seventh grade and went clear through twelfth until my junior year, and they built a new high school (on the east side of town). Then (our high school) turned into an intermediate school.

(Telephone rings. Taping stops, then resumes.)

WN: Okay. You were talking about your high school.

KL: Yeah, so the last two years of high school were spent in the new high school, which was Bend Senior High School then. That was really (different because then I had to ride the bus to school instead of walking).

WN: How did your mother support all of you? Or was it your mother and your stepfather?

KL: My mother and stepfather.

WN: What kind of work did they do?

KL: (My father) worked in (a saw) mill. This was a lumber town, so he worked in a lumber mill. And (my mother) was a housewife until my sophomore year—they (purchased) a service station. And so the last years at home, they were both working at the service station down the street. (It) wasn't (very) far from the house. Because of my (birth) father, my sister and I were considered orphans of the Second World War, (and the federal government) gave us full scholarships to any school we wanted to go to, so both of us went off to college, (first my sister since she was one year ahead of me.) We started off at Northwest Christian College and the University of Oregon in Eugene. And during that time, I couldn't decide whether to be a nurse (or) a social worker, (so I took general courses my) first year. But after the first year, I decided that it wasn't nursing. I didn't want to go into changing bedpans and all that. It was more dealing with people that I wanted to get into. So I made the decision then, and switched to Linfield College in Oregon, which, at the time, was really known for its social work (program).

WN: So you switched in the middle of your undergraduate . . .

KL: Right. (For my) sophomore year, I went to Linfield. I met my husband, Kenneth [Ling], at Linfield. We came (to Hawai'i for our junior year, and we) went one semester to the University of Hawai'i, then back to Linfield to (get our BA degrees).

WN: And when did you get married?

KL: (Halfway through our sophomore years at Linfield.) We eloped to Reno in the middle of the night in a snowstorm.

(Laughter)

WN: Cool.

KL: Yeah, it was cool.

WN: You eloped from Oregon or you eloped from Hawai'i?

KL: From Oregon. From (Linfield College). We had let the main people know that we were going to do this or we could (have been) kicked out of school for (leaving school without permission. They also had to have our parents' permission.)

WN: So you and Kenneth were students at Linfield.

KL: Both of us, (yes). And both in the same field of work too, because he was in sociology, (psychology, also). That's where we met. And then after we graduated, we came back (to Hawai'i) [in] '63 (to live).

WN: So you got married in 1960, grad '63.

KL: And we came back here (where) he got his master's [degree] at the University of Hawai'i (two years) after we came back. He went off to school, and I went on to having babies. (Laughs)

WN: When did you come to Hawai'i permanently?

KL: [Nineteen] sixty-three.

WN: Oh, in '63.

KL: Right. We graduated (in June of 1963). By August we were (back in Hawai'i to live).

WN: How did you feel about moving from Oregon to Hawai'i?

KL: The first five years were the hardest because, of course we didn't have enough money then. You're young, starting your family, newly married. So we couldn't really travel back and forth and I really missed the snow at Christmastime. So that was a big change. But after the first five years I finally adjusted to having summer all year round. (Laughs)

WN: Where did you live when you first came back.

- KL: Well, we lived with his parents for the first couple months, but we bought our home (in November) in Kailua, and we've been there ever since. Same home.
- WN: So you came back after you got your degree. You came back to Hawai'i, and, did you work at all?
- KL: I went to work (in) June of '65, at Pālama [Settlement], to (direct) their day camp. Like a (temporary) job, just for the summer, and then that December (of 1965), they called me and asked me to come back full time.
- WN: So let's start with the---starting at Pālama Settlement, tell me something about the day camp.
- KL: The day camp was huge. (There were) 225 youngsters from the area, mostly from the housing area. And I was able to hire---I think they gave me a staff of---this is going back some, now---I think I had a staff of about twenty-two people, and then a few junior leaders that weren't paid. And we had access to what they call Luakaha, which is Jackass Ginger, (and Waikahalulu, a park and pond area in Kalihi off of School Street. This park also had a waterfall.)
- WN: Yeah.
- KL: Sometimes we'd go there on a Friday. We always went out, took the whole day camp out on a Friday. (We would) go to (different) beaches, (and rope off a swimming area at the) beach. (We went to) different places (each Friday).
- WN: Okay. [Waikahalulu is] where the waterfall is?
- KL: Yeah, and we'd take them over there to swim. (We had) a lot of fun. (The kids) were six year olds to twelve year olds that (were attending day camp).
- WN: These were mostly Pālama residents?
- KL: Oh yeah. (They were) all Pālama residents. That was even before we even thought of (the) Pākōlea Program. That was the big thing for the summer. And of course, we had a lot of access to things right at Pālama to run our programs with the gym and the pool, and big rooms where we could do arts and crafts, (learning camping techniques, sports, and games). That was before all (of) the new buildings that are there now. It's the main old building that we had.
- WN: How did you get hired?
- KL: They just called and asked me to come to work after I'd been (hired to direct the) day camp. Earlene [Piko] was second in command at that time, and she had talked to Kenneth and asked (if he thought I would like to come back and work full time).
- WN: And what were your duties?
- KL: In the beginning?
- WN: Yeah.

- KL: (Directing) the day camp, training the staff, and then overseeing that they did all the things they were trained to do.
- WN: So how was it for you? You know, you're Haole from Oregon and coming into (KL chuckles) you know, a different kind of neighborhood?
- KL: Actually, you'd be surprised. They thought I was Portuguese and local. When we first got married, we came over and I said we went half a year to the University of Hawai'i.
- WN: Mm hmm.
- KL: Well, I was working at the same time (at a self-service drive-in). That's all it took for me to pick up the language, the pidgin. It was very easy to just fit right in, and it became my language. I didn't even realize it. It's so easy to do. So I didn't even notice I was speaking pidgin for a long time. Then we went back to the Mainland, my mother (said to) my husband, "What did you do to my daughter?" (She couldn't understand a thing I said. I had to stop and think before I spoke, so they could understand what I was talking about.)
- (Laughter)
- KL: You (don't) realize when you go back around people that speak regular English all the time (that your language had changed). Working (around) kids, the pidgin (became very easy to speak). Other family members had a hard time understanding me, and they were born and raised here. I must have just adjusted easily to (the) language (without noticing).
- WN: So this day camp, was it like, doing camping-like things or was it for recreation?
- KL: (It) was more recreation, the arts and crafts kind of a thing, sports. Of course, you know, you had your little basketball or baseball depending on what your counselor had worked up for you. But we ended each day camp with an overnight up at the Pālama Uka [camp site in Waialua], so we did get up there and do some real camping. Camping out. But even during the day camp, the counselors would set up programs where they would do some cooking out over fires—you know, at least make it a little bit like camping even though it was right in the middle of a city. So that was kind of fun for them, I think, to do some of that. And then on our outings, we'd try to cook out. In fact, one time, we went to Jackass Ginger. It had rained a lot. So we took along cardboards and went mud sliding. (Laughs) Oh, that was good. (Afterward we made a campfire and cooked our lunch.)
- WN: What were some of the difficulties that you had?
- KL: As far as work at . . .
- WN: As far as running the day camp.
- KL: Oh, the day camp. Oh, let's see. I don't think I really had---because I was very safety conscious to begin with, I trained the staff to be very safety conscious, so we didn't really run into anything in that area. I had a few staff that would come in late, but that was about it, that I could really think of as far as being any difficulties at all. The kids were really amenable to trying anything, enjoying themselves. And because they weren't charged a lot of



money—those that could afford, I think they might have charged them a dollar or two. Other than that, most of the things during those days were free for the youngsters. So I can't think of anything that. . . . Our buses all came on time. Everything seemed to move (very) smoothly.

WN: And how were the twenty-two kids selected?

KL: The twenty-two counselors?

WN: Well, when you---I'm sorry.

KL: About (225) kids. Ah, they just had to come in and sign up. There (were) whole families of (children), anywhere from five to ten in a family, would get to come in and sign up.

WN: Okay, so then in December, you started full time.

KL: (Yes.)

WN: What were your duties then?

KL: When I first started, I worked the one [o'clock PM] to nine [o'clock PM] shift, and since we didn't have the learning center and all the things that went with Pākōlea during that time, I was mostly visiting schools finding youngsters to do group work with. We talked to the teachers (to) find (if) any of the youngsters had any difficulties, mostly social-type difficulties in the classroom. And then we'd meet with them, ask them to come over, and we'd form little groups with them and (plan programs) with them. (It) could be outings, (crafts, or sport-related programs to get them feeling comfortable in a group). There (were) five (staff), at that time that did (this work). And then the rest of the day I was working in what they call the game room, which (had) pool tables, foosball machines, Ping-Pong tables—those three. (I was the evening supervisor with a high school student helping me.)

WN: You said you went to schools. What schools did you go to?

KL: What is that one right across the street?

WN: Likelike [School]?

KL: (Yes.) Likelike, Lanakila, (Ka'iulani).

WN: Ka'iulani?

KL: (Yes, also another that started with a K.)

WN: Okay, but it's in the Pālama area?

KL: Right. They were all elementary schools right in the Pālama area. It was kind of up towards the [Foster] Botanical Garden right now.

WN: Oh. Kauluwela [Elementary School]?

KL: (Yes.)

WN: Okay.

KL: Yeah. See, I forget these things. (Laughs)

WN: Long time ago.

KL: Yeah, it was.

WN: And then high schools and intermediate schools as well?

KL: We mainly worked with, at that time, the young ones, elementary. When the staff got together and decided that we need to do something with our older ones is when we got into the high school one. And intermediate school. And that was when we started in with the Pākōlea (Program). That came about '68 or right around there. We started creating it.

WN: And when you go to these schools then, teachers would identify some problems. What were some of the problems at that time?

KL: Mainly unable to get along with the other kids. Lots of it was picky, that age group especially. But a lot of them were Filipino and Samoans that were being picked on. So these were a lot of the kids that we worked with at that time. Those were the newest families that were coming in to the area. It was interesting to watch, though. Pālama area—the different groups that would come in, they would come in like droves. First the Filipinos all came in, stayed there a few years, maybe five years or so. And they moved on out. It's like an area where you move through. When you first get here from the other countries, you get settled, and then from there, you move right on out. The next group that we worked with was the Samoans that I remember. And then, of course, we still had our local youngsters that lived right around the area, so you had a lot of part-Hawaiian [people].

WN: So five of you would go out into these schools?

KL: Mm hmm. And visit them, and we'd get to know (them at) the school first and then slowly move them over to (do) things at Pālama, things that they enjoyed doing usually. Just to get them to come, and then we would talk to them about how to work out situations, you know, "How do you feel about somebody teasing you about this or that?" You know, those kinds of things, we'd begin to deal with a little. Problem areas. (It) was a good beginning for social work. You start (with the) more simple kinds of things.

WN: Right. So eventually, you were able to convince some of these kids to come to Pālama Settlement?

KL: Oh yeah. A lot of them.

WN: Was it a hard sell? I mean, was it difficult?

KL: Not really. To me, it was that they just needed a little bit of attention. You know, that's probably what they wanted at school, too, so if they were teased or something, they probably



beat up the kid (for attention). They were just looking to be part of the group, (receiving positive) attention from the other youngsters.

WN: So prior to Pākōlea starting, what types of programs—when they got there—did they participate in? Was it structured or more or less just game-type things?

KL: Well it was somewhat structured (in the beginning and) you had to move with the kinds of things the youngsters liked to do to keep them coming. So it depended on your group (what kind of program) you put together, what they would like to do. And then move from there. So you had a lot of different things. You could have---some of it might have been built around a little bit of sports or some of it could have been around. . . . We did a lot of silkscreening in those days, and we had a big art room. We didn't have the music room so much already, at that time. But I know that's (come) back again. But they used to teach piano in this building that's not there anymore. And a lot of different types of music was taught over there. And that was the big thing for a while. But that was kind of going out when I first went there. So it was more---silkscreening was a lot of fun, that they enjoyed doing. And they had some clay work because I remember (the potter's) wheel they used that you moved with your feet to make it go around. Of course, we had the swimming pool we could use for our group. Or we might get them together and go out to a movie or to the beach, go fishing. Some of them liked to go to the streams that I was telling you about that we used for day camp. That's when the streams were nice and clean, too. And fish in them. (We did a lot of *talking story* and this is where they learned a lot about how to take care of difficult situations. We spent a lot of time teaching them alternative behaviors.)

WN: So they would come after school and on weekends?

KL: Mainly after school because at that time, we didn't really work that much on weekends. Some staff did, but they (worked) mostly (in) the game room and the gym, (which was) open for the older youngsters. And the swimming pool. Those were about the three areas that were open during the weekends. So the group ones that we did with the youngsters from the school was mainly right after school kind of thing.

WN: So when you started in '65, that was a time when there was a lot of federal money coming in, wasn't there?

KL: That came later, closer to '70, '71, 'cause that's when we started the in-community treatment (programs), especially with drug (programs that brought in a lot of federal and state funds to the area).

WN: So how long did you do this once you started full time in December of '65? How long were you going into the schools?

KL: Well, we did this until we set up the Pākōlea (Program which was started about two years later). And then I didn't do that anymore. Then I moved into the Pākōlea. There were some others that still worked with the schools, so those groups continued (for a while), but a lot of them were incorporated into the Pākōlea Program anyway.

WN: And what did you do in the Pākōlea Program?

KL: Oh, let's see. Help create it in the first place. We all put it together.

WN: So what was the philosophy of putting it together?

KL: After taking our training with Jack Nagoshi [executive director 1962-64], I don't know if you've heard of behavior modification—he trained us all in that area. And we set our whole program up as a reward system. And each year we would run it, would get a little bit better and a little bit better 'cause we'd go over (everything we did) after each program and decide, "This didn't work that well, let's switch it to this, and that (worked great so let's keep it.)" The educational part (of the program was the backbone of Pākōlea, to increase their academic skills). They had to come in and do (educational) work after school, they had to. . . . I don't think they ate over there right away. That came a little bit later. And of course, their practice (on the field—team sports). And we went down and made sure at the schools they were doing well, you know. They had to do well in school. They could bring in their homework to do as part of earning their points in Pākōlea in their educational part (of the program). And it was amazing how well these youngsters moved from hardly doing anything in school to doing the max, you know, that they could. So it did what we hoped it would do: get them really interested in education even though we "pay" (not money) them to do it. (Laughs) And that's when they earned their points. They (could) use them to buy candies and goodies, (movie passes) and stuff like that that we provided them. Or they could (use) their points to (spend time with their favorite staff). Each year, got really bigger and bigger and bigger. Pretty soon, (we were) going to the Mainland (as an) [athletic] team. The teams became so good they'd win the state championships and if they did, they got a trip to the Mainland, (the ultimate reward that the whole team had to earn).

WN: How do you earn a point?

KL: By completing the work that's assigned by each of your (programmers). Each (person was) assigned to someone who (programmed them). You (were tested) in the beginning (to) find out what your level is, and (your programmer would) program you from there. It was our goal to at least raise you one full grade level in the three months of the program. And we could do it. Don't ever tell the teachers out there. (Laughs) Like you have a kid now. Let's say he's only reading first grade level but he's in second grade, you want to take that youngster and help him increase that, let's say in three months? You could do it. By (programming him for success, he will succeed. It was not difficult to raise a youngster's English or math scores one full grade level in three months in this kind of positive reward system.)

WN: By giving them a system of rewards?

KL: Right. And of course you have to give them a good program to follow with it. What I see the education system doing is holding the youngsters back. They look at them at the beginning of the year, "Well, this youngster's slow. He's not going to make it to the next grade, so I'm not going to worry about him. I'll just let his mother and father know about it in January, 'I think we better hold your youngster back for another year and let him try it again 'cause they're so far behind.'" Instead of programming that child work that would increase his abilities, they give him (work to do over and over again on the same level hoping he will somehow move ahead. He won't.) They'll continue to give him the same first grade reader over and over and over again until he has it memorized. Then they'll move him up. But they will not give him the first grade reader number one, move him up to two as soon as he's finished, up to three.

Because I don't know if they realize those same words are in the next one plus new ones. I mean they don't act like they know that. (Laughs) (I speak from experiencing this a number of times in my career.)

WN: So the advantages of the Pākōlea, I could see, the reward system, behavior mod[ification], right? And number two, that it's more of a one-to-one type of a situation.

KL: Right. Even though I would program ten people, they would get individual attention from me each time they came up to the learning center to check their work and talk to them about it, giving them help, you know, just like a tutor kind of situation. And on top of that, you see, as their grades went up in school, as they became more confident in themselves, they participated more in the class, they started looking a little smarter in the class. Did they get teased anymore? No, that started going away. A lot of the things that were happening to them changed due to all of that. They became important.

WN: And in the case of Pākōlea, the major incentive was sports, football?

KL: The major incentive to get them there was football, basketball. We had two [sports] each year. One in fall and one in the spring.

WN: I'm wondering. What if they weren't good in either sport?

KL: (It) didn't matter. (You) didn't have to be good. We had water boys. They had to go through the same thing, and they'd do it just to be in the program. Be part of the team and they do the education part, everything. The whole bit, just to be in the program. We didn't turn people away.

WN: So the underlying philosophy of the whole Pākōlea Program was Jack Nagoshi's behavior modification?

KL: It's where it got its roots.

WN: System of rewards.

KL: Right. And (Jack would) come back and give us training every so often that would really give us some good ideas for implementing new and different things each time that turned out to be really good. Usually, your defensive team wouldn't get any recognition. It's always the offense, you know, these guys. Well, the defense, every time they did a good hit, you know, would get so many points for that. Well, they'd get skull or crossbone (stickers) on their helmets, you know. So they'd earn points out on the field too, by that, you know, and get rewarded. There was a number of reward systems actually set up in there. And they loved that. The other (reward on the field) was the shape of a football (sticker), and those were put on (your helmet) if you caught a pass or [picked up] a fumble, those kinds of things, you know, more of an offensive move that you made. So those were kind of built in (rewards for on the field).

And we did have a girls' program, you know, the cheerleaders. The cheerleaders were also part of the whole team. They had to do all the same things.

WN: Okay. So then Pākōlea started off and running, and then what happened with you?

KL: Okay, and then after Pākōlea, then we came to the problem of drugs. How we going to deal with drugs? The money is out there for drug [programs], right? From federal, from state, from everybody. Okay, what kind of programs can we put together? Started first with law violations groups. This (was the beginning of the) in-community treatment [program]. There were two groups set up. One, the beginning law violators, and one real heavy law violators, and then the third group that formed was the drug program. So we actually had three different types of programs for three different problem areas in the state. And these kids came from all over O'ahu. They didn't just come from our area. They were referred to us by the courts. This was set up with the [family] court system. And first I started a little bit with the beginning law violators and I went to training and we did—what was the name of that? (Laughs) I forgot that already.

WN: We can get it later.

KL: Shoot. It had to do with seeing the child in you, being able to identify who was responding: the child, the adult, or—transactional analysis. That's what it was. So we took that training and we implemented that into our program. Some of the other workers went to what they call the 'ohana training, where it was family-oriented type of groups that used the family idea, the 'ohana. And then came the drug program, which we wrote up, and it became funded by both federal and state funds. Drugs had become a real problem in law violations anyway, so that was set up then. And we started using transactional analysis, the 'ohana ideas and some of that and then we moved into actualizing human potentials being used. We had awfully good trainers come from the Mainland, or Pālama sent us to the Mainland, you know, for training on all of these different methods that came up. I don't know if they still are creating these things anymore. I never hear about any. But during that time, so many new ways of working with people and new types of things like transactional analysis, guided group interaction, all those different kinds of (group work) programs were being created all over the Mainland, and it was good to have all that training. As I used to say, the more tricks you have in your pocket, the better worker you become, (the more techniques you learn, the more) you can pull out and work with a youngster, because each one is so different, you know. So that went on for many years. Eleven years, I think, I spent working in the drug program there.

We used our behavior mod there. We used our point system with our education during the day, we used our point system [to reward the kids for] coming in not so loaded [i.e., high]. You can come in even if you were on your drug. You were not told to go home. You can come in if you can't function, you lay down in the corner and go to sleep, but you be there because you're court-ordered here, you know. So they would come in, and we learn how to color them in [i.e., color code their progress charts according to their condition]. We colored them in yellow, orange, or red. In other words, if they were lightly coming off of something, orange, you can partway function. You're halfway there. Red, forget it. You're out of it totally. So every day they came in, they were colored in. And those charts were right in their books. They got to see them every day. It's not something you hide from them. And then they'd spend the day in the learning center doing their work. They would have group [activities] for an hour, and we would go over these things if they were able to. If they weren't, they still stayed with us. And after a while, they got to the point where they wanted to do better themselves, so they would come less and less on their drugs so that they would be able to do their work. And it was very interesting to watch that happen.



WN: And these are still in school . . .

KL: No. They're all out of school.

WN: Different ages?

KL: All ages. Anywhere from twelve to seventeen.

WN: So was there any clinical or medical facilities there to help them? Or was this all social?

KL: No. All social. We had no---well, if we had a youngster that came in too high or something, that we thought needed medical attention, we'd take (them) to Saint Francis [Medical Center], you know, if they needed detoxing or something, which would happen not too often. I don't think we had too many come in (that needed medical attention).

WN: So what was it like for you going from a program, you know, where you take kids that are not bad off, you know, in terms of using behavior mod to help them in their school work and so forth, to really an islandwide type of a drug treatment center?

KL: I don't think I really felt much of a difference in the transition. You just kind of moved into it. Things kind of slowly happen. You work with those kind youngsters, you know, when you took care of the game room. Some would come in loaded. You learn to begin to deal with those kinds (of problems) along (the way). Even the law violators, you know, they're just kids. You didn't see 'em really as---well, you burglarize fifty homes, you know, over your lifetime. Those are not the kind of things you even talked about: your burglaries, your. . . . They might mention them, just trying to act big or something, but it's something you don't spend a lot of time on. (You) spend a lot of time on what you're going to do with tomorrow, you know, what would you like to do?

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

WN: In the early [19]70s, what drugs are we talking about mainly?

KL: You're talking about paint, pot, a little barbiturates, some amphetamines. Kids were more into barbiturates, I think, than (any) other (drugs). Then it moved into hallucinogens, acid, and things like that. Most of them couldn't afford cocaine and heroine and that. So you didn't really see too much of that. And they'd never heard of ice [crystal methamphetamine] and what have you, like they have today.

WN: Did you ever see the drugs on the Pālama Settlement grounds?

KL: Oh yeah, sometimes we had to take away from them. Some would hide their paint cans (chuckles) in the bushes. We'd have to locate 'em and get them out of there.

A really interesting and really educational program we ran one time with them: we went out

and bought all these little white mice and we gave every youngster (one). This was a little science program we ran with them. We gave every one of them a mouse to take care of, and they had to make it a house, they had to take care of it every day, they had to feed it, and they had to keep track of all the things they did with it. It was up to them whether they were going to take care of that mouse or whether they were going to leave it over in the corner and let it die. We would not do anything. It was up to them. It was their mouse, you take care of that. And you would be surprised the difference in the youngsters how they would take care of that little mouse. It was like their little baby. And how they treated it, you could almost (relate it to) exactly what was happening to them at home. If that youngster came from a home where the parents were never there or cared nothing about—that little mouse sat over in the corner. Very seldom would it get clean, fed or anything. And then they would write down, you know, anytime they did anything of course. That was all kept on a little log, and all the staff had a certain amount of people to keep watch how they handled theirs. (Each staff also kept a log on their students, which they shared with them at the end of the project.)

And then at the very end of the program, they each had to give their mouse their drug of choice. You know, if you were a paint sniffer, that's what your mouse would (get). If you were a barbiturate user, that's what your mouse would get. And we had each one of them give it to their mouse. And so many of 'em got so close to them, I mean, that first thing in the morning, they were sitting on their shoulder, while they did all their studies all day, you know, and then put away at the end of the day. They had a little maze to run it through and everything. They got really attached to 'em. And so the day that we had them give their mouse their drugs, we said, "Okay, now you give your mouse your drug, and you time everything, and you watch, you put 'em in the maze, and you watch what he's going to do." You know, and you had to write all down. We made sure it wasn't something that overdosed them, you know (chuckles) that killed them or anything, because if they wanted them, they were going to take them home. We would let them take it home. So they each gave 'em their [drug], and they learned so much [from] what that mouse did, about themselves, how they looked when they were on that specific drug, which was their drug of choice. It was (a real learning experience for the students, and a very positive science project that produced a lot of learning for both students and staff).

WN: Did anybody refuse to give their mouse the drug of choice?

KL: No, 'cause they didn't know what was going to happen really. They didn't realize what that drug did to them. (When they) saw what that drug did to (their mouse), they saw how they [the kids] looked and reacted to the other people. Like this one youngster I remember so well. He was a paint sniffer. Well, paint can make you real ugly and he didn't realize that, you know, when he's sniffing his paint. We put a little paint on a cotton ball, and he had to give his mouse some paint. That mouse turned on him, and he was one of those that always had his mouse on his shoulder, I mean he loved that mouse. That mouse turned on him (and) bit him. He couldn't believe what was happening so it was a real turnaround for him and it was amazing. Some of them, the barbiturate users especially, don't realize that when you use [barbiturates], you may go down, get real tired. But when you're coming off, you go way up before you come back down and straighten out. So this one kid had given it to [his mouse], of course his mouse went over and (fell) asleep for quite a while, but after a while that mouse gets up and he's got these really spooky eyeballs. He went to go see about him, (and) put him in the maze, and the mouse bit him, too. The mouse became really vicious, and they could see, you know. They didn't realize this is what happened to their body when they were on the very



same drug. They go way down, then they come up, way up before they taper off. It was really amazing.

WN: Did you have good stories as to some of these kids that actually did it or help them get off?

KL: Oh yeah. Well, some of them, as far as---the one that I was telling you about that loved his paint, gave it up altogether. He totally gave it up. He's married, has a family, doing very well out in (the community). So you just never know. Some (learned, it got through) to them, and others, it (didn't). Some of them are dead, that were in the program. So you can work with them, but one thing about that, you (won't) know until much later, the rewards of what you did (to help them learn). They may move through the program and get ready to go back out to school and do well in school, but you don't really know how long that's going to last until you see 'em later in life. (You) run into them later (in life) and know if the program (really worked) for them. So you can't really measure it until much later, you know. A lot of these programs, I think even the Pākōlea one, you (can't) really measure (some of the effects) until much later (in life). Then it's funny 'cause they come up to you and (say), "Hi! How are you Karel!"

"Uh, do I know you?" 'Cause when you last saw them, they looked totally different, (they) looked nothing like (the) thirty-year-old person with a family and kids (standing in front of you). (Chuckles) So it's funny though. They can identify you right away, but the names—as soon as they tell you who they are, then I know. But by looks, I don't recognize them.

WN: Was it a finite program? I mean, in other words, was there an end to the program? Or did you graduate from that program?

KL: Oh yeah. We even had graduation parties. Not high school diplomas like that. The graduation party, they could have it wherever they wanted. When they were ready to graduate, their choice, "Where would you like to have it? The Top of the I? You know, it doesn't matter. We'll foot the bill for you." And we had graduations all over the place, and it was like a regular graduation party, your group though, was the one that went with you to have the party.

WN: What do they need to do to graduate?

KL: Okay, they had to go clear through the program, they had to be off drugs. Or if it was law violations, they would have to have been off their law violations for a certain period of time. They have to go through our program, get up to where they could function in school, get back into school, and be doing well in school before you could ever set up a graduation program. And the [family] court hearing would be before the graduation program. So these youngsters all had to go back to court. And we'd ask for them to be released from the court's jurisdiction. Now these kids, a lot of them came in lieu of going to Ko'olau [Youth Correctional Facility]. So that meant they're already adjudicated to be locked up, but we'll take them instead. They (had) one more chance. And if they (made) it through the whole program, we go to court with you, and we tell them we feel they're ready for court's release already. No probation, no nothing. So that gave them a new whole start in life altogether. Not everybody made it. Not everybody could even make it a week.

WN: And what happened? They would drop out or just not come or . . .

KL: They'd be picked up and put in Ko'olau or whatever the courts (decide). 'Cause at their court hearing, their POs [probation officers] would say—they would be adjudicated right there—"Can we hold this till we go and see if Pālama will take them."

And they have to come in for an interview and they [the kids] have to say, "Yeah, I really want to try this program before I go." Some kids would come and say, "No I don't want to." Fine. Bye. We're not going to beg you. We only took the ones that wanted to give it a try. So instead of being ordered, then, to Ko'olau, they were ordered to Pālama. That meant they had to come every day. And you could break your probation by not showing up.

WN: Was Pālama like the first stop? Or was it, you know. . . . Ko'olau was obviously the last stop.

KL: Yeah. Pālama was your last stop before Ko'olau for some kids. For certain programs, it wasn't. Like, remember, we had more than just the end-of-the-line youngster—the one with the drug problem that has a lot of law violations. [Pālama Settlement also worked with] the ones with just heavy duty law violations, and we had some with just behavioral problems, what they call status offenders: runaways, those kinds of things. So those were put into the program because usually, the status offenders were usually not going to school too often, so we worked with them and got them back into school. The heavy duty law violators were usually either adjudicated or close to it. Some of them came in before they got that far. Got turned around too. A lot of them avoided Ko'olau, and a lot of them went. I forget what the percentage was, but (it didn't) mean (you were) not going to Ko'olau. You (had) to make it through the program or you're going anyway. And we'll go back to the hearing and say, "No. They didn't (make it. We're returning them to court.)" We had no compunction about stating that in the hearing, "No, this youngster is not willing to participate."

WN: The program was called the in-community treatment program?

KL: Mm hmm.

WN: What does that . . .

KL: In-community means living in the community.

WN: So did they live in the community?

KL: Yeah. Any community over the island. It wasn't just in Kalihi-Pālama.

WN: Oh, I see.

KL: In-community meaning the whole island actually. 'Cause we had from Waimānalo, Wai'anae, all the way Pearl City, to Hawai'i Kai.

WN: How would they get to Pālama?

KL: Bus. Some of them came in with their parents on their way to work. One (youngster) used to roller skate to Pālama (from over fifteen miles away). (Laughs)

WN: So the ones that were school-aged would come after school, and those that were out of school

would come for the whole day?

KL: Not in in-community. In-community, you came the whole day. The Pākōlea Programs and the other programs we had before were after-school programs.

WN: I see.

KL: Oh yeah. These are youngsters already out of school and in trouble.

WN: And I was wondering, you know, there are other programs going on—Pākōlea and so forth—was there a mix? Was there a clash?

KL: No.

WN: 'Cause these are different populations?

KL: Not really. In fact, a few of our youngsters that were in the in-community joined Pākōlea, too, after school, after they were finished. 'Cause we'd finish with one [program] before the other one started. So most of them would have gone home when the other ones are coming in except for those that decided that they wanted to be in the Pākōlea too.

WN: Okay, so you did this until 1981?

KL: That's when I left.

WN: Now, when you were in it, were you the director of it?

KL: Ah, the last five years, yeah.

WN: When you became the director, did you make any changes in the program?

KL: Probably. (Laughs) Whatever was suggested---changes were made by staff sitting down and going over all the different areas of the program, which ones were working, which ones were not, and it was never one person's decision to make changes in anything. It was always the whole staff that sat down and made those decisions. I think that's probably what made the program so good. That's a lot of brainpower.

WN: And this is federally funded? This particular program?

KL: This one had federal and state funding. Both. But federal funding was mostly for the drug program, and I think they did some for Pākōlea because it was for predelinquent (youngsters), and that was our predelinquent program. So the funding was coming in for predelinquent, so we got it on two ends.

WN: I see.

KL: The bottom end and the top end. The federal funds for working with youth is funny anyway. It'll move from one thing to another. Whatever everybody's screaming about at the time is what the federal funds are going to be for.

WN: That's where the money is. (Laughs)

KL: And in the beginning, the money was with predelinquent programs, so that's what we set up first. After that, it became, "Oh, drugs are big bad monsters," so all the federal money started pouring into the state for drug programs. And they even sent people down to train us in the drug program area. So, was interesting.

WN: So you left in 1981. By the time you left---can you compare the time you left from the time you started? Talking about those couple years or so, in drug usage, clientele . . .

KL: The increase in drug usage was big. Probably started in about late [19]60s, early [19]70s is when you saw it really go uphill, and crimes of course, then, went up too. The crime level. It got better for a while. It seemed to take a dip. When all those programs were available to everybody, you know, they set up a lot of programs around the islands. 'Cause I know, I used to go out and train some of the drug counselors that were out there. So there were a lot of them set up, and once the money dried up, it's like, why didn't they do something before that happened? You know, why didn't they work on the state picking it up or private companies picking it up? 'Cause once that (funding stopped), and those programs (disappeared, the drug usage and law violations went) right back up the hill again. You know, you could see the big drop, and then all of a sudden boom, (the problems start anew). That's when you started seeing ice and all that crap start coming in. Big. So probably we'll go through another (laughs) one of those (funding-the-problem-areas) again.

WN: So why did you leave?

KL: I didn't really need to work already. And I was getting tired. After working with problem youngsters for fifteen years, I decided I think I'd like to do something a little different. So I went home, set up a day-care, Ling's Keikiland, for about three years. And then I decided, I love these kids, but (this is not for me now. So I made another change.)

WN: Was that by---your house?

KL: Yeah, it was in my house. And I taught all little ones (to swim) by (the age of 2). All of them knew how to swim, (identify their colors and write the alphabet). I took them (into the pool) from the (time they were) three months old. They usually left to go to preschool about 2½ and 3 [years old]. Mostly 3. So I'd had 'em from really young until they were about that old. And then I went to work at Ko'olau to teach. I was (going to) go help out a little while. They called me from [The] Detention Home and asked if I could teach at Ko'olau, and Rally Miller—I don't know if you ever knew him—he's a teacher out at [The] Detention Home.

WN: What was his name again?

KL: Rally Miller.

WN: Rally Miller.

KL: [Rally Miller], I guess was trying to help Ko'olau find some teachers so of course Kenneth [Ling, KL's husband] came home and said, "Would you like to go teach a little while? It's only part time." This is another federal-funded program, by the way, that . . .

WN: Teach at where?

KL: Ko'olau.

WN: Oh okay.

KL: (It was) a federally-funded program for the part-time teachers. I said, "Sure I guess I'll do that. I can give up a morning." (Laughs) So I decided I'd go, and I went, and I taught there for 5½ years. And that's when I got interested in computers. 'Cause they had all these computers donated, (and) all these programs were on these computers that were educational. Good educational programs. (You could) teach the youngsters reading, writing, math, had everything. Social studies, science, the whole bit. And all they had was a University of Hawai'i student to teach for a short period of time, and then it closed down (because) they had nobody to run it. And all this whole computer room, and I said, "Well, this is ridiculous." That was so good for the kids, I said, "Well, I'll go over to Windward Community College and learn how to run these silly things." (Laughs) And I knew they were good because one of my own children had trouble reading, and they suggested I get a computer—which was a little Texas Instrument in those days—and stick in the reading programs, and it really helped, so I said okay, I'll do that. So I went over, learned how to use the computers, went back to the (computer) lab, opened it up, and I did all the computer laboratory work with them, and I ran it like I would at Pālama. You know, we used to have all these card sets of different programs to use, or work sheets and whatnot. Here I had all these programs. All I had to do was know where this kid was as far as his reading and math (skills). I individually programmed each one of them in areas they were the lowest in and moved them right along (as fast as they could move). They did really well. They loved computers. A lot of it was built-in games (that taught you math, English, and even science and social studies). The programs were set up in a way that really enticed them, which was good.

(After 5½ years), I went about three months to help out at Children's Advocacy Center, and that's all I could handle there. I don't know if you know what that is. That's where they interview the youngster that's been sexually abused. That program was set up because of the problem with (too many people interviewing the children in sexual abuse cases and confusing them and trying to tell them what to say, et cetera).

WN: Oh.

KL: You remember that?

WN: Yeah, yeah, yeah. When was that?

KL: Years ago. (Laughs) Back in the [19]80s I think, somewhere. Because they said that that's why they built that children's advocacy center, but what they needed was somebody to put together a tracking system on the computers to track (the) abusers. So I went over there and helped with that for three months. I took [a] federal job (at [the Kāne'ohe] Marine Corps Air Station, now known as Marine Corps Base [Headquarters], in the supply department).

WN: In what year?

KL: [Nineteen] eighty-nine. Interesting. Many job openings over here for social work that I



just—no way. (Laughs) Once I gave it up, that was it.

WN: So since you've been here, you haven't been doing any social work at all. What is your current title here?

KL: Fund administrator.

WN: Fund administrator.

KL: I do only accounting.

WN: I see.

KL: Only accounting. And my computer doesn't talk back to me too often.

(Laughter)

WN: Let me ask you couple more questions. As you look back at your years working at Pālama Settlement, do you have a sense of accomplishment?

KL: Oh yeah. Yeah. I mean, I learned a lot. Probably a lot more than they ever even did, all the kids that went through there, you know. You learn a great deal. Once you begin to see, too, how the youngster turned out—well, you see a lot of growing is there in the program, but the biggest one is when they're out and back in the community and doing well. Then you feel really good. Wow! Those guys did it, you know. So something had to be good in that program.

WN: In what ways do you feel it could have been improved?

KL: That's beyond me. 'Cause I really think the people that were there at the time [who] worked on (the programs), all our input is what made it the best, and I don't think there was any other program any better. (Since then, I don't think there has been such success with any other programs as those run during that time. It took great commitment on the part of the staff. Many left around the same time.)

WN: Why, do you think?

KL: I don't know, maybe they all got burnt out about the same time, too. You can handle so much of that, and then you gotta do something else because it takes a lot of energy, a lot out of you, you know, to do that, because you really have to be into it. It's not something you can just sit on the side and say . . .

WN: Is the program still in place? At Pālama?

KL: (In name only. The programs now are much different than the original ones.)

WN: Would you say then, it's more the individuals in the program or the program itself?

KL: It's the people that put it together, and how they ran it (that made it what it was). I'm not



saying the ones that are there (aren't good; they are different). They (lack the teamwork), and once you do your own thing, that's what you've got: just your own thing. You really have to have everybody believe in what you're doing and be willing to make it happen. You know, everybody had the input. I mean they were all excited about putting it together, and I think that's what really makes a difference. If you've got a staff that can work like that, a group of them, you've got it made. If you don't, if everybody's just doing their own thing, you have (little), and I think it really shows.

WN: Is it a sign of the times, you think?

KL: Could be. I don't know. (Times and people do change.)

WN: Okay. Thank you very much.

KL: No problem.

END OF INTERVIEW

# **Reflections of Pālama Settlement**

**Volume I**

**Center for Oral History  
Social Science Research Institute  
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa**

**August 1998**